

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5105

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 0854

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LT

SUBJ: GOVERNMENT/CHURCH CLASH

1. RELATIONS BETWEEN GOL AND VARIOUS
DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN
LESOTHO, WHICH HAVE BEEN GRADUALLY
DETERIORATING FOR PAST FIVE YEARS, TOOK
SHARP TURN FOR WORSE THIS WEEK WITH
ANGRY PUBLIC EXCHANGE OF CHARGES BETWEEN
CHURCH LEADERS AND GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN.

2. AT MASS ECUMENICAL PRAYER MEETING
AT MASERU STADIUM AUGUST 10, LEADERS
OF FIVE MAIN CHURCHES IN LESOTHO
REPORTEDLY PASSED RESOLUTION CALLING ON
GOVERNMENT TO PERMIT PEOPLE TO
GOVERN THEMSELVES ACCORDING THEIR
OWN DESIRES AND SPECIFICALLY FOR A
RETURN TO PARLIAMENTARY PROCESSES,
JUSTICE, AND RESPECT FOR FUNDAMENTAL
RIGHTS. CHURCH LEADERS APPARENTLY DID
NOT ACCUSE RULING BNP DIRECTLY BUT
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CHARGED "POWER-HUNGRY" POLITICIANS WITH

RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE
SUCH AS THOSE IN 1965, 1970, AND
1974. (EMBASSY ATTEMPTING OBTAIN
TRANSLATION OF RESOLUTION AND SPEECHES
FOR FORWARDING TO DEPT.)

3. GOVERNMENT ISSUED PRESS RELEASE AUGUST
12 CALLING CHURCH MEETING "A TIRADE
OF MALICIOUS AND DISTORTED CHARGES
AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND STATING
THAT GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE ARE
PREPARED TO STAMP OUT FOMENTING OF
UNREST BY "RENEGADES AND FOREIGNERS."

4. MEMBERS OF CABINET HAD BEEN INVITED
TO ATTEND MEETING BUT REPORTEDLY FOUND
OUT IN ADVANCE THAT EMBARRASSING THINGS
MIGHT BE SAID AND DECIDED NOT
TO GO. HOWEVER, KING MOSHOESHOE II
APPARENTLY DID NOT GET THE WORD AND
NOT ONLY ATTENDED MEETING BUT SAT
THROUGH WHOLE PROCEEDING. GOVERNMENT
PRESS RELEASE STATED THAT "GOVERNMENT
REGRETS FURTHER THAT HIS MAJESTY WAS
SUBJECTED AND OBLIGED TO LISTEN TO
HYPOCRITICAL AND BITTER ATTACKS ON HIS
GOVERNMENT."

5. COMMENT. CHURCHES REPRESENTED
AT MEETING INCLUDED CATHOLIC, ANGLICAN,
AND LESOTHO EVANGELICAL, WHICH ARE BY FAR THE
MOST IMPORTANT CHURCHES IN LESOTHO
AND PROBABLY IN CLOSER TOUCH WITH
PEOPLE THAN IS THE GOVERNMENT.
THAT THEY SPOKE OUT PUBLICLY AND STRONGLY
AGAINST JONATHAN GOVERNMENT IS FURTHER
EVIDENCE THAT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR GOVERN-
MENT HAS BEEN BADLY ERODED. NEVERTHELESS,
GOVERNMENT IS STILL STRONG IN SENSE IT
HAS THE MEANS (POLICE) AND WILL TO STAY
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IN POWER. GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE REPORTEDLY
FURIOUS OVER INCIDENT, AS EVIDENCED BY THE
HEAVY-HANDED PRESS RELEASE, AND UNDOUBTEDLY
WILL MAINTAIN CLOSE WATCH OVER CHURCH
ACTIVITIES, BUT THERE NO INDICATION YET
THAT GOVERNMENT IS PLANNING DIRECT
REPRESSIVE ACTIONS.
HAUGHT

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